Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (withdrawn): A method for improving plant growth characteristics, said method comprising increasing expression in a plant of a nucleic acid sequence encoding a GRUBX protein and/or comprising increasing activity and/or increasing levels in a plant of a GRUBX protein, and optionally selecting for plants having improved growth characteristics.

Claim 2 (withdrawn): The method of claim 1, wherein said increase is effected by introducing a genetic modification, preferably in the locus of a gene encoding a GRUBX protein.

Claim 3 (withdrawn): The method according to claim 2, wherein said genetic modification is effected by one of site-directed mutagenesis, homologous recombination, TILLING and T-DNA activation.

Claim 4 (currently amended): A method for improving plant growth characteristics, said method comprising introducing and expressing in a plant a construct comprising a promoter which functions in a plant cell operably linked to an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein, said GRUBX protein consisting of the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The method according to claim 4, wherein said nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein is overexpressed in a plant.

Claim 6 - 8 cancelled.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The method according to claim 4, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claim 10 cancelled.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method according to claim 4, wherein ~~expression of said nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein is driven by~~ the promoter which functions in a plant cell is a seed-preferred promoter[[,]] ~~preferably a prolamin promoter~~.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method according to claim [[11]] 4, wherein said improved growth characteristic is increased yield and/or modified plant architecture, each relative to corresponding wild type plants.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The method according to claim 12, wherein said increased yield is increased seed yield.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to claim 13, wherein said increased yield and said modified plant architecture comprise one or more of (i) increased seed biomass, (ii) increased total number of seeds, (iii) increased number of filled seeds, (iv) increased seed size, (v) increased seed volume, (vi) increased harvest index, and (vii) increased Thousand Kernel Weight, all relative to corresponding wild type plants.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): A method for increasing the yield of a plant, which method comprises increasing expression in a plant of a GRUBX encoding nucleic acid and/or increasing activity and/or levels in a plant of a GRUBX protein.

Claim 16 (withdrawn): A method for the production of a transgenic plant having improved growth characteristics, which method comprises:

a. introducing into a plant or plant cell a nucleic acid sequence, a nucleic acid sequence capable of hybridising therewith or a portion thereof, encoding a GRUBX protein or a homologue, derivative or active fragment thereof;

b. cultivating the plant cell under conditions promoting plant growth.

Claim 17 (withdrawn): A method for the selection of plants having improved growth characteristics, which method is based on the selection of superior allelic variants of a GRUBX encoding sequence and which alleles give rise to improved growth characteristics in a plant.

Claim 18 (withdrawn): Plants obtained by a method according to any of claims 1 to 9, with the proviso that said GRUBX protein is not encoded by the nucleic acid sequence represented by the GenBank accession AX927140.

Claim 19 (withdrawn): An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising:

(i) a nucleic acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 6, or the complement strand thereof;

(ii) a nucleic acid sequence encoding an amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 7, or homologues, derivatives or active fragments thereof;

(iii) a nucleic acid sequence capable of hybridising (preferably under stringent conditions) with a nucleic acid sequence of (i) or (ii) above, which hybridising sequence preferably encodes a protein having GRUBX activity;

(iv) a nucleic acid sequence according to (i) to (iii) above which is degenerate as a result of the genetic code;

(v) a nucleic acid which is an allelic variant of the nucleic acid sequences according to (i) to (iv);

(vi) a nucleic acid which is an alternative splice variant of the nucleic acid sequences according to (i) to (v);

(vii) a nucleic acid sequence which has 75.00%, 80.00%, 85.00%, 90.00%, 95.00%, 96.00%, 97.00%, 98.00% or 99.00% sequence identity to any one or more of the sequence defined in (i) to (vi);

(viii) a portion of a nucleic acid sequence according to any of (i) to (vii) above, which portion preferably encodes a protein having GRUBX activity.

Claim 20 (withdrawn): An isolated protein comprising at least part of one of the polypeptides selected from the group consisting of:

(i) a polypeptide as given in SEQ ID NO 4;

(ii) a polypeptide as given in SEQ ID NO 7;

(iii) a polypeptide with an amino acid sequence which has at least 40.00% sequence identity, preferably 50.00%, 60.00%, 70.00% sequence identity, more preferably 80% or 90% sequence identity, most preferably 95.00%, 96.00%, 97.00%, 98.00% or 99.00% sequence identity to the amino acid sequence as given in SEQ ID NO 4 or SEQ ID NO 7;

(iv) a polypeptide comprising at least an UBX domain, preferably an UBX domain and a PUG domain, and optionally a Zinc finger domain;

(v) a homologue, a derivative, an immunologically active and/or functional fragment of a protein as defined in any of (i) to (iv),

with the proviso that the protein sequence is not a sequence represented by SEQ ID NO 2, or database entries Q9ZU93, AAR01744, Q9D7L9, Q9BZV1, Q99PL6, ENSANGP00000020442, Q7SXA8, Q9V8K8, Q96IK9, ENSRNOP00000037228, or AAH07414.

Claim 21 (withdrawn): A construct comprising:

(i) a nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein;

(ii) one or more control sequences capable of driving expression in a plant of the nucleic acid molecule of (i); and optionally,

(iii) a transcription termination sequence,

provided that said nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein is not the nucleic acid molecule represented in GenBank Accession number AX927140.

Claim 22 (withdrawn): A construct according to claim 21, wherein said nucleic acid molecule encoding a GRUBX protein encodes a protein represented by SEQ ID NO 2 or a protein according to any of (i) to (v) in claim 20.

Claim 23 (withdrawn): A construct according to claims 21 or 22, wherein said control sequences comprise at least a seed-preferred promoter, preferably a prolamin promoter.

Claim 24 (withdrawn): A construct comprising an expression cassette essentially similar to SEQ ID NO 5.

Claim 25 (withdrawn): A transgenic plant or plant cell, characterized in that said plant or plant cell has increased expression of a nucleic acid sequence encoding a GRUBX protein and/or increased activity and/or levels of a GRUBX protein.

Claim 26 (withdrawn): A transgenic plant or plant cell of claim 25 having improved growth characteristics.

Claim 27 (withdrawn): A transgenic plant according to claim 25 or 26, wherein said plant is a crop plant comprising soybean, sunflower, canola, alfalfa, rapeseed or cotton, preferably a monocotyledonous plant such as sugarcane, most preferably a cereal, such as rice, maize, wheat, millet, barley, rye, sorghum or oats.

Claim 28 (withdrawn): Plant cells, plant parts, including harvestable parts and/or products directly derived therefrom, propagules or progeny of a plant according to claim 25 or 26.

Claims 29 - 34 (Cancelled).

Claim 35 (new) The method of claim 11 wherein the seed-preferred promoter is a prolamin promoter.